

Washington County SWMD: Wabash River Jr. Defenders Inducted

Born out of the recognition by the Wabash River Defenders for a need to include local youth in their efforts, the Wabash River Jr. Defenders program was formed through a partnership with the WCSWMD. The program is designed specifically for 1st through 4th grade. The program was developed to teach the children the importance of preserving the Earth's most precious natural resource; Water.

In the spring of this year, Jen Rankin, the WCSWMD Director, presented the Wabash River Jr. Defenders very first "Freddy the Fish" presentation to a group of 99, 4th grade students. It was a hit! The press, Superintendent of the local school system, and five volunteers from the adult Wabash River Defenders were there.

To induct the 99 children in four fourth grade classes into the Wabash River Jr. Defenders group this year, 14 volunteers went to a local elementary school. As part of the induction for the children, they were presented a short program that taught them about water quality problems such as erosion, point source pollution, non-point source pollution, fertilizer run off, acid rain, what a tributary is, and how the Wabash community is downstream of the main tributary. Following this presentation, children were told the story of Freddy the Fish and how he decides to leave the perfect, clean, cool waters of his upstream home to go on an adventure downstream. During his journey Freddy faced many different types of pollutants, and the children were asked for their ideas on how they could help poor Freddy. After the story, the children were loaded on to buses and taken to one of Wabash County's local tributaries where there was a recap presentation of what they learned in class. Half of the group was sent upstream and the other downstream with instructors. The children were given tasks of cleaning up the creek and identifying different types of potential pollution or water quality issues. To wrap up the event, the children were gathered again for a summation of what they learned and were asked to stand with fins up! They then repeated a pledge and received their "I am an official Wabash River Jr. Defender" badges.

The pledge recitation read:

I, as a Wabash River Jr. Defender,
 Promise to do my best
 To protect my local tributary.
I understand how my decisions
Effect the environment and the wildlife
 Which live in it.
I will do my best
 To make good decisions
 Because I am
A Wabash River Jr. Defender!!

